

Wednesday, 10th February 2016 - Woodbury Castle with Graham Knapton

"A Soggy Slog"!

It's an indication of the resilience of OVA Walkers that, despite weeks of rain and an unsettled start to the day, 18 walkers (and one dog) joined Graham for his 5.5 m ramble over Woodbury Common. Perhaps it was a desperate need for some fresh air at any cost, or simply blind faith in the weather forecast for the day, which promised improving conditions by mid-morning, that had encouraged us. Consequently, there was a fine array of expensive looking wet weather gear on display: four walkers, including the Leader, had sensibly opted for Wellington boots, whilst all the others, bar one, had donned their gaiters in an attempt to stave off the inevitable mud bath that we were all expecting.

The sun came out as we joined the East Devon Way across the road from Four Firs car park; the pebble tracks were already filled with water and the going was soft to boggy across the open common. Then we began quickly to take on the same brown speckled hue of the dog's fur coat, helped by its frequent sorties amongst us and a fair amount of splashing from our own efforts to stay upright! We followed a FP to Cattles Farm through Woodbury Wood where we saw some snowdrops. The track gave way to open grassland, but those who know their Devon countryside in winter were ready for the heavy, squelching suck of sodden soil on our boots. At the top of the hill we were rewarded by wonderful views over the Exe Estuary from Dawlish up to Exeter, all in brilliant sunshine.

Generally, the Leader tends to be quite apologetic for any stretch of the route which involves walking on public roads, but in this case, we were touchingly grateful for the relief of walking on "terra firma" on a lane north of Woodbury village, even though, it was the normally much-despised tarmac!

From Hogsbrook Farm we walked through Woodbury Golf Course, with glimpses of the ex-Mansell Mansion, before passing through the ramparts of Woodbury Castle and returning to the start of the walk.

David and Rosemary Hatch

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